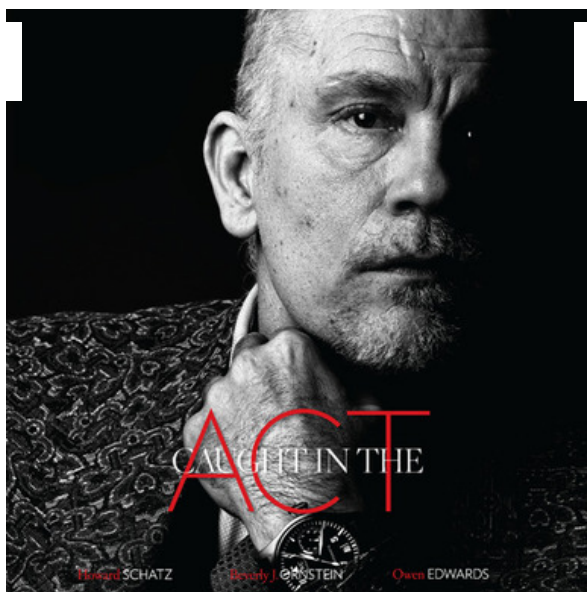


People & Parties

Howard Schatz Photographs Actors Acting

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Caught in the Act: Actors Acting marks photographer Howard Schatz's twentieth book.



Known for both his editorial and fine art work, as well as his photographic explorations of the human body, underwater imagery, and subcultures like boxing, New York-based photographer Howard Schatz has just put out his twentieth book. Titled *Caught in the Act: Actors Acting* (\$65, Glitterati), the book explores the magic and hard work behind the creative process via the expressive faces of 85 actors, including John Malkovich, Elizabeth Moss, Michael Douglas, Amy Poehler, Jane Lynch, and Sir Ben Kingsley. Here, Schatz talks about directing each illustrious actor through a variety of characters and improvised scenarios.

How did the idea for *Caught in the Act* start?

HOWARD SCHATZ: Well, I'm very interested in the creative process. Simply speaking, how does a sculptor take a giant piece of stone, and with hammer and chisel, make something beautiful, magnificent? For actors, they take print on a page and become a character in another world.

You not only photographed these actors, but you also interviewed them, and even filmed some. What questions did you ask?

HS: When I did the interviews, I told the actors I was interested in creativity. I wasn't interested in gossip, drugs, or divorce. I was interested in how they develop their art, how they continue to educate themselves, see and observe, and get better and better. And then I questioned them about the actual task and business of acting—what they like in a director; what's the difference between TV, film, and television; how do they challenge themselves and search for their characters.

Which brings us to the acting. How did you direct your subjects?

HS: I would give them parts to play and they would act. It was quite fantastic. The wonderful thing was I had a front row seat to superstars of acting. I would give them a part and they were just right there and just gave it to me . . . I told them I had prepared 20 or 30 characters for them . . . Then I told them I would like to take a serious portrait—not a vanity portrait—that had voracity, truth, power, meaning. And if I got something really good, I'd send them a copy. So, they were sort of in on it.

How long did you spend with each actor?

HS: I would say that I spent two, three, four hours with each actor. I didn't know ahead of time it would be that long.

What did you love most about this project?

HS: The reason I make photographs is to surprise and delight myself. And this was full of that. To use a metaphor, [actors are not] afraid to get naked. They're not afraid to expose themselves and become anybody . . . It was tremendously wonderful, surprising, and fantastic to see how each actor created their own character from the few words that I gave them. And I learned very quickly to say as little as possible.

What's next?

HS: This is my twentieth book. My books get taken away from me. My wife says, 'You've got enough material here for a book, let's go to the publisher.' And I usually say, 'No, no, I'm not done yet.' I never feel like I learned everything I could. I never feel like I get tired or bored with it . . . I have lots of projects like that. Lots of things to do, lots of discoveries to make, lots of adventures to have.